

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 171644Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9987

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 2339

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PINT, UR

SUBJECT: NEIZVESTNIY'S TROUBLES CONTINUE

REF: MOSCOW 1196

1. SUMMARY. AS REPORTED REFTEL, SCULPTOR ERNST NEIZVESTNIY WAS TOLD IN LATE JANUARY THAT HE WOULD SOON BE GRANTED AN EXIT VISA. ALTHOUGH HE STILL FEELS THAT HE WILL EVENTUALLY GET OUT OF THE SOVIET UNION, HE HAS HAD A NUMBER OF UNEXPECTED PROBLEMS AND IS THREATENING DRAMATICALLY TO "GO PUBLIC". END SUMMARY.

2. NEIZVESTNIY HAS NOT YET RECEIVED HIS VISA AND SAYS THAT HE HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY PUT OFF BY OVIR EACH TIME HE HAS ASKED THE REASON FOR THE DELAY. HIS DOSSIER HAS LONG SINCE BEEN COMPLETE. HE WAS TOLD THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO LEAVE THE USSR BY THE END OF FEBRUARY. THIS HAS NOW BECOME A PRACTICAL IMPOSSIBILITY. NEIZVESTNIY HAS NO IDEA WHEN HIS VISA WILL BE GRANTED. HE FEELS THAT THE APPROACH OF THE PARTY CONGRESS IS SLOWING DOWN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND FEARS THAT THE AUTHORITIES MAY HAVE DECIDED TO KEEP HIM IN THE USSR UNTIL AFTER THE CONGRESS.

3. THE SCULPTOR COMMENTED ON SOME PROBLEMS INVOLVED WITH SHIPPING HIS WORK ABROAD. HE HAS FINALLY ACCEPTED THAT THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THOSE OF HIS WORKS STILL IN HIS POSSESSION WILL HAVE TO REMAIN IN THE USSR (MOST OF THEM ARE IN
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A GARAGE AT THE VILLA OF KRUSHCHEV'S SON), BUT DOES INTEND TO

TAKE OUT A LARGE NUMBER OF PLASTER CASTS AND MODELS OF HIS LARGER WORKS AS WELL AS SOME BRONZES. HE SAYS HE HAS ENOUGH MONEY TO PAY FOR THE SHIPMENT. WHEN THE ARTISTIC VALUATION COMMISSION VISITED HIS STUDIO TO ASSESS THE VALUE (FOR CUSTOMS PURPOSES) OF THE WORKS IN QUESTION, THEY TOLD HIM THAT FOUR SMALL BRONZES AND A SERIES OF PLASTER CASTS COULD BE EXPORTED ONLY AFTER PAYMENT OF 56,800 RUBLES. NEIZVESTNIY IS CONVINCED THAT THIS EXORBITANTLY HIGH AND ARBITRARY FIGURE WAS CHOSED TO MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO EXPORT THE WORKS. HE SAYS HE COMPLAINED TO THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE ABOUT THE VALUATION, AND WAS THEN OFFERED 5,000 RUBLES BY THEM FOR ONE OF THE BRONZES. THIS "CONCESSION" HAS SO INCENSED HIM THAT HE SAYS THAT HE TELEPHONED DEMICHEV (WHOM HE KNOWS PERSONALLY) ON FEBRUARY 13 AND THREATENED TO HOLD A PUBLIC DEMOLITION OF THESE WORKS IN THE PRESENCE OF WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS. HE IS NOW WAITING FOR THE MINISTRY TO MAKE THE NEXT MOVE, BUT SHOWS EVERY EVIDENCE OF BEING SERIOUS ABOUT "GOING PUBLIC", UNLESS THE MINISTRY BACKS DOWN ON THE VALUATION. NEIZVESTNIY SAYS THAT HE WOULD PAY NO MORE THAN 10,000 RUBLES.

4. NEIZVESTNIY ADDS THAT PETTY HARASSMENT OF BOTH HIS WIFE AND HIMSELF HAS CONTINUED. HE NOTED THAT HIS WIFE HAD RECENTLY RECEIVED ANONYMOUS TELEPHONE CALLS RELATING STORIES OF NEIZVESTNIY'S ALLEGED SEXUAL INFIDELITY, AND THREATENING HER WITH BODILY HARM. IT HAS BEEN UNOFFICIALLY SUGGESTED TO HIM THAT THERE MIGHT BE A SUDDEN REVERSAL OF POLICY, ALLOWING HIM TO LEAVE, LIKE ROSTROPOVICH WITH A SOVIET PASSPORT (I.E., WITHOUT RENOUNCING SOVIET CITIZENSHIP) AND THEREFORE OSTENSIBLY TEMPORARILY. THIS OFFER WAS CONTINGENT ON HIS REMAINING QUIET. NEIZVESTNIY DOUBTS THAT IT IS SERIOUS AND SAYS THAT HE WOULD PREFER TO GET OUT "ONCE AND FOR ALL" AND AS A JEW, NOT A SOVIET CITIZEN.

5. NEIZVESTNIY SAID THAT AFTER HE LEAVES THE SOVIET UNION HE INTENDS TO SPEND A YEAR OR SO IN ITALY STUDYING ITALIAN SCULPTURE, FROM MICHELANGELO TO THE PRESENT, AND THEN HOPES TO SETTLE IN THE U.S.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARTISTS, EXIT PERMITS, EMIGRANTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MOSCOW02339
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X4
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760059-0670
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760243/aaaablue.tel
Line Count: 98
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 MOSCOW 1196
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <31 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NEIZVESTNIY'S TROUBLES CONTINUE
TAGS: PINT, UR, (NEIZVESTNIY, ERNST)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006